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Bibliometric Analysis of the Creator Economy

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ABSTRACT

The creator economy has emerged as a rapidly developing research domain driven by the expansion of digital platforms, content monetization models, and creator-centered economic ecosystems. Despite increasing academic attention, the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and global collaboration patterns of creator economy research remain fragmented and insufficiently synthesized. This study aims to map the development of creator economy research and identify major trends, influential contributors, emerging themes, and future research directions through a bibliometric approach. The study employs bibliometric analysis using publications indexed in the Scopus database and visualized through VOSviewer. Several analytical dimensions were examined, including co-authorship networks, institutional collaboration, country collaboration, citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, overlay visualization, and density visualization. The findings reveal that creator economy research has developed into an interdisciplinary field connecting economics, digital platforms, social media, information systems, innovation, and emerging technologies. Co-authorship and institutional analyses indicate that scientific production remains concentrated among several influential scholars and institutions, while country collaboration analysis identifies the United States, China, India, and the United Kingdom as leading contributors to the field. Keyword analysis demonstrates a thematic transition from foundational discussions on economics, employment, and commerce toward more specialized topics including social media ecosystems, creator monetization, artificial intelligence, blockchain, decentralization, sustainability, and intellectual property.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented rise of digital technology and the emergence of social media have created an entirely new economic environment around the world, especially when it comes to how people produce and earn money from their creations. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of the creator economy, a digital system in which people leverage online platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, Patreon, and podcasts in order to earn money through their creative content and audience engagement. In contrast to typical economic models based on corporate entities and the

traditional media industry, the creator economy provides individuals with direct access to their audience without the involvement of any corporations. The increased availability of internet and mobile connectivity, as well as the growing popularity of platform-based business models, has made this trend possible and important [1], [2].

The creator economy has grown in recent times because of the rise in demand for digital products and the rising popularity of social media websites. People have stopped being mere consumers of information, and instead, they are now active contributors, creating videos, podcasts, digital artworks, educational material, gaming streaming sessions, and more kinds of digital entertainment [3], [4]. This is also leading to entrepreneurship, job creation, and innovation in digital sectors. In addition to that, the creator economy stimulates economic development since creators earn from ads, sponsors, subscribers, affiliate marketing, crowdfunding campaigns, and product sales. Digital platforms' flexibility and accessibility have motivated many people across the globe to engage in creative pursuits as their primary or secondary source of income [5].

Apart from the economic implications, the creator economy has also garnered academic interest across a variety of fields, such as marketing, communication, entrepreneurship, information systems, and digital media. Scholars have delved into different topics related to the creator economy, such as audience engagement, platform management, monetization techniques, algorithmic visibility, digital work, influencer marketing, and the entrepreneurism of creators [3], [6]. Scholarly work has pointed out that creators function in platform ecosystems, where algorithms, platform rules, and audiences' preferences determine opportunities for exposure and monetary gain. Additionally, scholars have come to see creators as entrepreneurial subjects who leverage creativity and branding to maintain themselves in the digital world [6].

Although a growing body of research related to the creator economy has emerged, there is a tendency towards fragmentation of this field, which manifests itself through the dispersion of relevant papers in various academic domains and journals. The existing literature frequently deals with one or another platform, creator type, or revenue model in its studies but does not shed light on the intellectual structure of the entire field. This makes it hard to find out what topics are currently being discussed in the creator economy area, who the key scholars are in this field, how researchers interact with each other, and in what directions future research might be headed. In such circumstances, bibliometric analysis appears to be a useful tool for conducting empirical research since it allows for an in-depth evaluation of scientific publications using citation analysis, author collaboration analysis, keywords, etc.

A bibliometric approach has been extensively applied to many different subject areas to explore scientific progress and determine research gaps such as those connected with digital economy, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and platform ecosystem. Nevertheless, no bibliometric study of the creator economy has been conducted yet. Taking into account the fast growth of the industries and academia that deal with digital creators, a bibliometric assessment becomes especially important to explore the evolution of the creator economy and determine which topics have drawn most attention while identifying future research areas. The bibliometric approach can be particularly helpful for scholars, policymakers, businesspeople, and digital creators who need to know about the intellectual framework of creator economy and the direction in which it should evolve.

Despite an increase in scientific interest in the creator economy, no review has been performed that would comprehensively analyze the intellectual architecture of the literature devoted to this topic. Researchers have paid attention only to certain aspects of the phenomenon, including influencer marketing, monetization opportunities offered by digital platforms, interaction

between creators and their audiences, and digital entrepreneurship, but none of the authors has studied the dynamics of scientific evolution in the field. As a result, the scientific community does not know about the most significant publications, major topics in the creator economy literature, collaboration networks, and trends in creator economy research. Additionally, the lack of bibliometric analysis makes it difficult for scientists to determine research gaps and define priorities in the creator economy studies. Hence, there is a need to perform bibliometric analysis of the creator economy. This paper seeks to examine the growth of scientific research on the creator economy using a bibliometric approach.

2. METHODS

The present research makes use of a bibliometric analysis methodology that will be used to explore the emergence and development of research concerning the creator economy. Bibliometric analysis is a statistical research methodology used for evaluating and mapping scientific literature on the basis of publication data, citations, authors, keywords, among other aspects. This methodology is viewed as appropriate to investigate the intellectual structure and development of a scientific field due to its ability to systematically analyze large amounts of scholarly literature. The current paper will utilize bibliometric methods to explore various issues related to creation economy literature such as publication trends, key authors, productive institutions, citation trends, collaboration patterns, and thematic areas.

The data sources used in this research are retrieved from credible academic sources such as Scopus and Web of Science that are known for their indexing of high-quality scientific research papers. Data collection in this paper will be carried out by searching scientific publications using the above-mentioned keywords such as “creator economy,” “digital creators,” “content creators,” “influencer economy,” and “platform economy” for English language articles, conference papers, and review articles within a certain period. The selected dataset will be subjected to a filtering process aimed at removing duplicates and irrelevant articles. Finally, the cleaned dataset will be exported in compatible file formats to conduct bibliometric analysis by the use of VOSviewer.

The analysis process will go through a number of steps. Firstly, there will be descriptive analysis, which will allow us to detect publication trends by year, prominent journals, prolific authors, organizations, and countries that have produced studies on the creator economy. Secondly, citation analysis will help us understand which publications and authors have been cited the most. Thirdly, there will be co-authorship analysis, which will reveal patterns in scholarly cooperation. Fourthly, there will be keyword co-occurrence analysis, which will show the most common themes, as well as emerging topics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Co-Authorship Analysis

The network visualization map for co-authorship shows that research related to the creator economy is organized in multiple scholarly networks based on collaboration intensity as well as the thematic specialization of the researcher. It seems that the red cluster serves as the hub of all collaborations because it comprises researchers like Alice Li H., Zhang Jingling, Shapira Daniel, Hofstetter Reto, Mayzlin Dina, and Kannan P.K. All the researchers in the cluster seem to be linked to each other and with researchers from neighboring clusters. The presence of so many connecting lines between the researchers in this cluster suggests that these researchers serve as the major influencers in the intellectual evolution of creator economy research due to their collaborations.

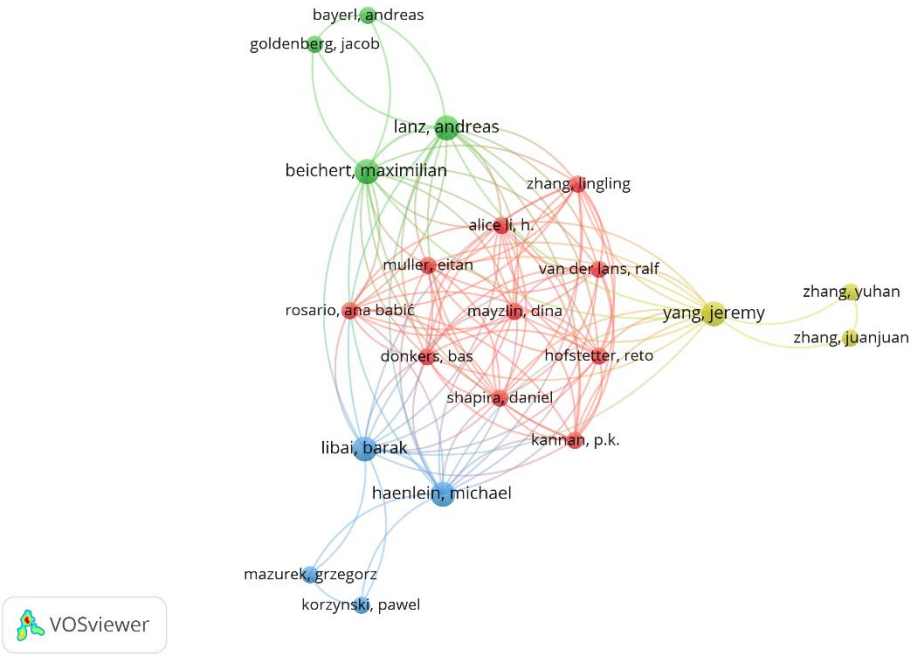

Figure 1. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Additionally, there is the green cluster whose members include Lanz Andreas, Beichert Maximilian, Bayerl Andreas, and Goldenberg Jacob. The cluster is characterized by a high degree of cohesiveness and multiple bridging connections to the core red cluster. The implication is that there exists a specialization within the creator economy field with some linkage to the main creator economy research. On the other hand, there is the blue cluster whose members include Libai Barak, Haenlein Michael, Mazurek Grzegorz, and Korzynski Pawel. These authors exhibit a unique pattern of collaboration which could mean inputs into the field of study from adjacent fields like digital marketing, platform ecosystem, consumer engagement, or social media studies. In contrast, the yellow cluster, consisting primarily of Yang Jeremy, Zhang Yuhan, and Zhang Juanjuan, appears more peripheral with fewer but strategically important connections to the central network. This positioning suggests an emerging or more specialized line of inquiry that is beginning to integrate into the broader creator economy literature.

Collaboration among institutions demonstrates the fact that the creation economy research is done by a relatively small number of interconnected institutions, implying that institution collaboration in this area is still emerging. It can be noted that two groups of collaboration are distinguishable. One of these groups is represented in the red color and includes such institutions as Voronezh State Technical University, Penza State University (Russia) and Lomonosov Moscow State University, which exhibit high collaboration internally due to a number of institutional links between them. However, from these institutions, it is Penza State University that seems to hold a key bridging position and act as a mediator among both internal and external institutional clusters.

Figure 2. Institution Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

The green cluster comprises K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University and NUST MISIS (Russia). These two organizations demonstrate strong connections to each other, yet they also maintain ties with the organizations within the red cluster. Connections between clusters reveal that research on the topic of the creator economy does not occur separately but rather occurs through collaboration across several institutions in order to produce interdisciplinary knowledge. Yet when compared to other more developed fields of inquiry, the network is still fairly sparse and geographically centralized, with few institutions beyond this region participating. This demonstrates that the creator economy is indeed a fledgling research area, one in which institutional leadership is limited to only a few institutions of higher learning. For future progress, the inclusion of additional international players can be beneficial.

The analysis of the country collaboration network clearly shows how studies in the creator economy domain have grown to be an interconnected area of research globally, albeit with the research still being dominated by a few countries that play the role of knowledge centers in the global arena. The United States is clearly in the center of the network as shown by the huge node size, with connections with many other countries from the various clusters in the network. This implies that besides having many publications, the United States also facilitates collaborations and influences research directions in the creator economy field.

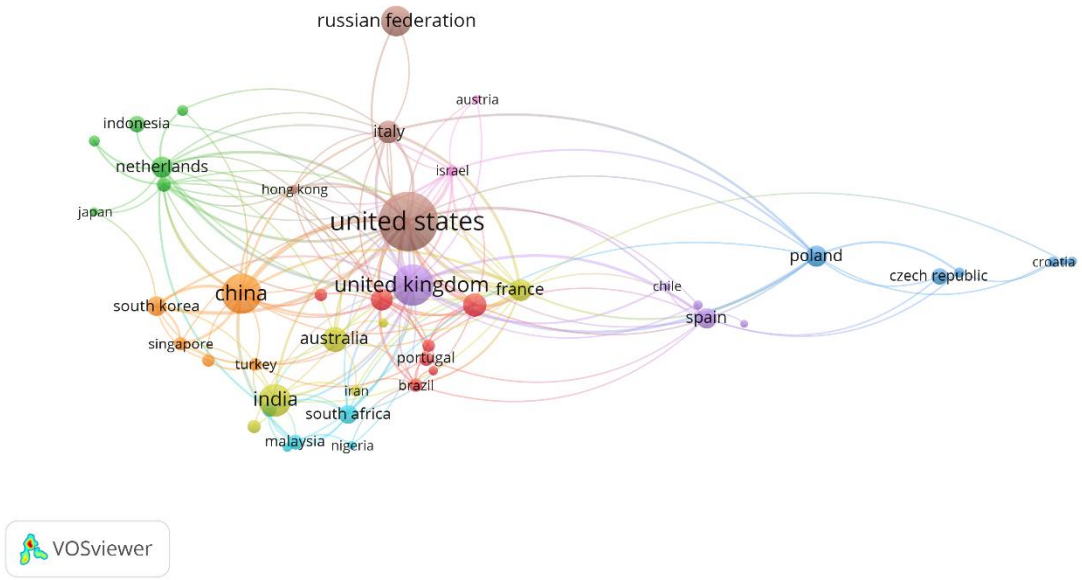

Figure 3. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

In addition to the above, some secondary collaboration hubs also become apparent. China, India, and the United Kingdom are significant hubs with high levels of international linkage, thus demonstrating an increased role in expanding the global research network. China shows significant connections with Asian nations and beyond, implying a growing focus on digital technology, influencer economy, and digital entrepreneurship. Similarly, India shows wide-ranging collaborations, thus implying the growth of the role of developing countries in contributing to the research field. On the other hand, the United Kingdom and France act as intermediary agents bridging various geographical locations. Specifically, regional clusters can be seen in the network. The green cluster, consisting of countries like the Netherlands, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea, indicates the existence of a cluster of activities taking place amid cooperation between Asia and Europe. The blue cluster, composed of Poland, Czech Republic, and Croatia, represents an even smaller cluster of cooperation from within Europe, but one which has some relationship with the wider global research network. Additionally, countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, and South Africa appear to serve as bridging agents for research communities.

3.2 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

From the network diagram of keyword co-occurrences, it is evident that the study of creator economy has become a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary concept involving insights drawn from digital platforms, economics, innovation, technologies, and governance. In the diagram, node sizes correspond to keyword frequencies, and connections represent relationships and co-occurrences in publications. Of all the keywords, the "creator economy" appears to be one of the most prominent ones in terms of co-occurrence strength, which implies that the field is beginning to stand on its own as a scholarly subject, separate from larger conversations about digital media and platform economics.

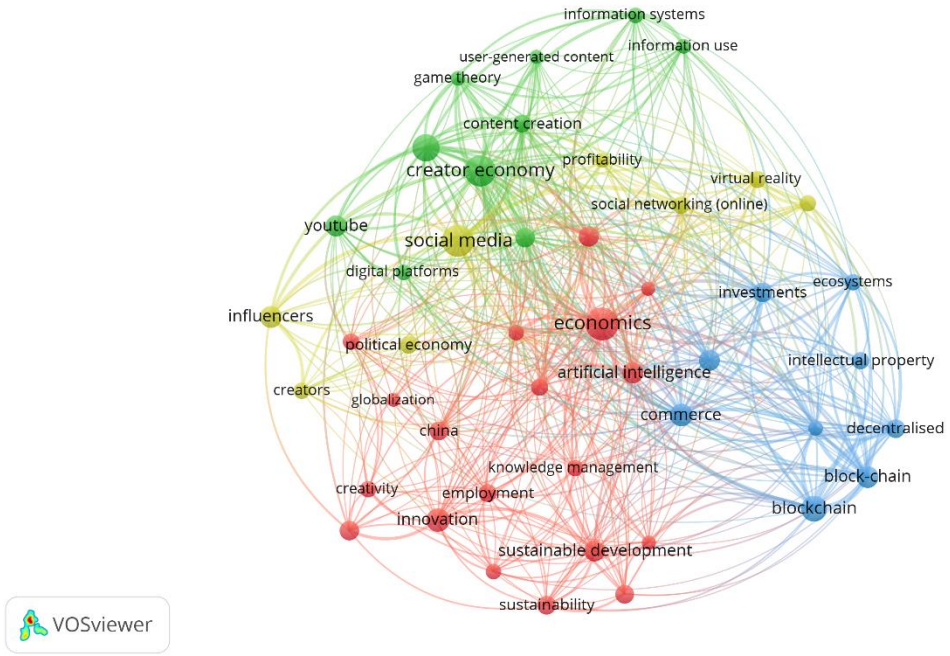

Figure 4. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Cluster "green" reflects the social and platform-focused aspects of creator economy research. The important keywords for the cluster are: creator economy, social media, content creation, user-generated content, information system, information use, YouTube, and digital platforms. Cluster "green" implies that considerable attention is given to studying how creators extract value through platform-enabled interactions, and how users create the ecosystem. The inclusion of terms such as information system and information use imply that creator economy research goes beyond the boundaries of communication studies and explores technology adoption. Moreover, the connection with game theory implies efforts to provide explanations regarding the strategic interaction between creators, audiences, and platform owners. The red cluster is indicative of the economic, innovation, and sustainability approaches to creator economy studies. The inclusion of terms such as economics, innovation, artificial intelligence, sustainable development, sustainability, employment, creativity, knowledge management, and political economy demonstrates that the creator economy is no longer considered by scholars to be merely a content creation issue, but rather a new economy with wider socio-economic consequences. The inclusion of the term 'artificial intelligence' shows a rising interest in the area of automated and AI-driven content creation and productivity, as well as labor organization. At the same time, sustainability-related terms hint at discussions surrounding the economic viability of the creator economy.

The blue cluster represents the research line which focuses on technology and governance-related studies. The presence of the terms like blockchain, block-chain, decentralised, intellectual property, commerce, investments, and ecosystems reveals rising academic attention towards infrastructure and ownership issues related to the creator economy. It is indicative of debates around topics such as decentralized creator platforms, monetization solutions, tokenization, ownership of digital assets, and intellectual property protections. Linking blockchain and commerce shows the possibility of developing a new model for the creator economy where creators would have an alternative economic relation with their

audience without depending on central platforms. The yellow cluster seems to be a reflection of emerging themes associated with influencers, creators, virtual reality, profitability, and social networking (online). Although this cluster is smaller compared to the others, it serves the purpose of being in bridging roles between the dynamics of the platforms and their technological/commercial implications. Its existence indicates that the domain is headed towards more focused discussions on immersive technologies and creator economy.

The overlay visualization demonstrates the development process of research topics in the creator economy whereby colors depict the average year of publishing the corresponding keywords, from dark blue which implies old topics (2018-2020), to newer topics in green/yellow color (2022-2024). According to the visualization, early research topics in the creator economy were predominantly concerned with basic notions such as economy, commerce, innovation, workforce, knowledge management, intellectual property rights, and blockchain. Such early topics demonstrate that the creator economy initially arose as a result of wider debates concerning digital markets, platform business model, technological infrastructure, and economic change.

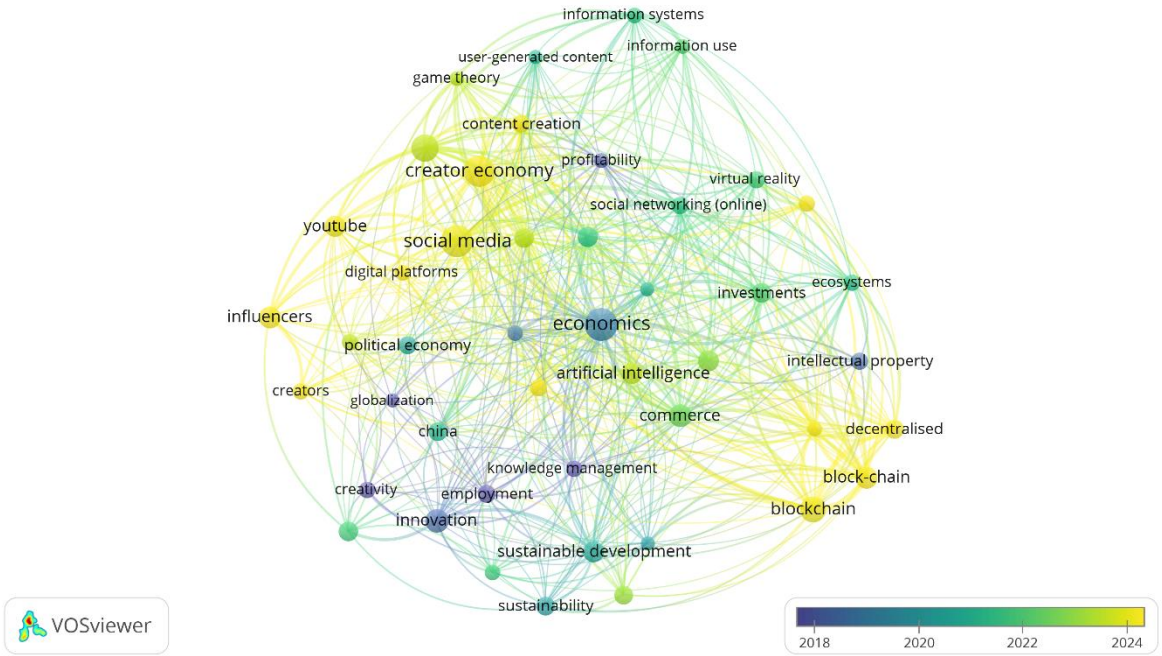

Figure 5. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

With the development of the area, there was an evident trend towards the platform-based and creator-based ecosystem, marked by such terms as social media, creator economy, content creation, information system, information use, digital platform, user-generated content, and YouTube, which can be seen in the green color and show the most current studies on the topic. Hence, it becomes clear that creator economy was studied not only from the macroeconomic aspect but also as an economic process involving economic actors in a platform-based ecosystem. The prominent role of the creator economy term on the map proves that the idea became an independent scientific stream with many interconnections on technological, social, and business levels. Furthermore, the terms of artificial intelligence and virtual reality are seen as the ones showing development and expansion, thus reflecting increasing interest in the role of

modern technologies in productivity and experience for creators and their audiences. The latest themes, denoted by yellow nodes, reflect where the researcher's focus is headed next regarding the field of creator economy research. Such keywords like decentralised, block-chain, influencers, creators, profitability, and social networking (online) reflect a growing trend towards studies on creator monetisation, decentralised digital ownership, alternative platform governance, and sustainable creator business model. The occurrence of blockchain in both old and new time periods highlight how decentralised infrastructures continue to be areas for research in progress.

The visual representation of density shows the intensity and maturity of topics in the creator economy literature, where light-yellow tones show the topics that have high-frequency and mature conceptually, whereas dark-blue tones show underdeveloped or rare topics. Creator economy, social media, and economics topics show the highest concentration, suggesting that they make up the core topics in the creator economy body of knowledge. From their position at the center and the high-density levels, we can conclude that the existing knowledge in this topic has been mainly devoted to investigating how digital creators create value via social media and change the economic system. Proximity of these core topics and other related topics, such as content creation, digital platform, profitability, and information systems, indicates that the field has taken a more multi-disciplinary approach in recent years.

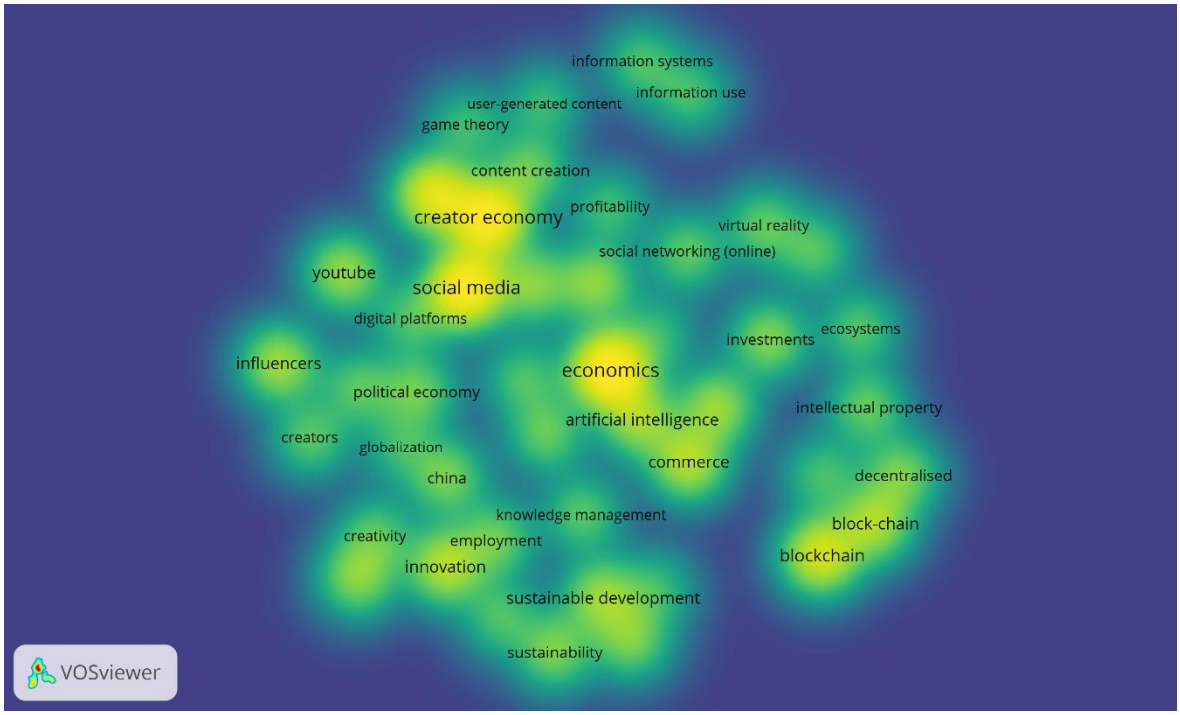

Figure 6. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Beyond the core hotspot area, various developing and moderately developed thematic fields can be identified. Terms like artificial intelligence, blockchain, block-chain, decentralised, commerce, investments, intellectual property, sustainable development, innovation, and virtual reality form medium density clusters, indicating growing, yet not fully formed research domains. The above mentioned themes indicate that the domain is starting to evolve from basic analysis of creator behavior into more complex research on creator revenue models, decentralized business models, technology integration, and sustainability. In addition, the following themes like

influencers, ecosystems, creators, employment, and sustainability form lower density clusters, offering possible research directions for the future.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citations	Authors and Year	Title
365	[7]	Job creation during the global energy transition towards 100% renewable power system by 2050
317	[8]	Impact of artificial intelligence on employees working in industry 4.0 led organizations
244	[9]	Prospecting non-fungible tokens in the digital economy: Stakeholders and ecosystem, risk and opportunity
225	[10]	The Rise of Crowd Logistics: A New Way to Co-Create Logistics Value
211	[11]	Tiered Governance and Demonetization: The Shifting Terms of Labor and Compensation in the Platform Economy
201	[12]	The labour of user co-creators: Emergent social network markets?
198	[13]	Platform governance at the margins: Social media creators' experiences with algorithmic (in)visibility
188	[14]	The Nested Precarities of Creative Labor on Social Media
185	[15]	Sentiment analysis in health and well-being: Systematic review
177	[16]	How China escaped shock therapy: The market reform debate

Source: Scopus 2026

It can be seen from Table 1 that the most cited literature within the area of creator economy studies is not related solely to this specific area; rather, it is composed of multiple fields, such as platform economy, artificial intelligence, digital assets, value creation via crowds, creative labor, and governance. Specifically, the highest cited publication by [17] is related to the theme of employment transformation during digital/technological shifts; the other two works by [8] and [18] reveal increasing interest towards artificial intelligence and non-fungible tokens as the key factors of digital economic ecosystems. Moreover, highly cited works by [11] [12] [13] are strongly associated with the main topics of creator economy research since they are focused on such problems as platform labor, co-creation, algorithmic visibility, monetization, and precariousness of creators.

4. CONCLUSION

Bibliometric analysis helps to offer a holistic understanding of the intellectual structure, cooperation, and development trends of scientific research in the area under consideration. It is evident that the creator economy represents an increasingly interdisciplinary area of study that encompasses economics, digital platforms, social media, information systems, innovation, and technology, among others. Co-authorship and institutional cooperation analyses indicate that knowledge production takes place among some influential authors and institutions in the creator economy, while the collaborative research conducted among countries indicates the leading position of the USA, China, India, and the UK in the global scientific community dedicated to studying the creator economy.

The keyword co-occurrence, overlay, and density analysis supports the notion that research in the creator economy has progressed from initial focus areas such as economic changes, labor aspects, and online business to more specific areas such as social media environments, creator economy revenue, platforms, and technology integration. The fact that current areas of interest include artificial intelligence, blockchains, decentralization, sustainability, and intellectual property suggests that the field is progressing into a more advanced phase marked by theoretical integration and broader applications. This idea is supported

by the citation analysis, which shows that fundamental literature has a strong impact from works on platform labor, governance, value creation, and new economic practices.

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